Crash Course

By: Aradellia

In hindsight, letting Mako Mankanshoku behind the wheel was probably the best and worst idea he had ever agreed to. It was bad for so many reasons, including her family's history of being distracted drivers, her lack of speed control and the refusal for book learning. The good side of it? He learned something very important about Mako.

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"You want me to do what exactly Mankanshoku?"

Mako puffed up her cheeks. "Teach me how to drive! I want you to help me learn to drive so I can get my own driver's license!"

A vein throbbed painfully in his head. Of course it would be that; who wouldn't want to teach Mankanshoku to drive?

Apparently a lot of people from what Mako explained to him. From what she told, her family had a rather 'horrific' driving record (from what No-Star students claimed and backed up with obvious evidence) and claimed that she was ready to try it so she could take a hand in helping out her father in his so-called medical job in the slums. She quickly however changed her story again and again, giving different reasons and explanations behind the want to drive and why she wanted to, but every last remark of every argument ended with her asking for Gamagoori to teach her to drive.

"Why me though?" he asked. Mako jumped up toward him with an added index finger pointed toward him.

"Because I trust you and I know you can drive even though you forgot that if you spin a car you will spin out and eventually crash! You protected me and Ryuuko without thought and I know that you won't put me in harm's way when you teach me! Plus you're the only person I know and trust that actually has a license! Please teach me how to drive Gamagoori!"

Gamagoori felt his face heat up quickly, surprised by Mako's statement. This small, eccentric, No-Star student invested trust in him? It was true; he had grown to understand and relate to Mankanshoku, but it never occurred to him that she had done the same, and to the level of trusting an enemy. He had to admit his own actions bordered on insubordination to Lady Satsuki but

Mankanshoku was something different; something calming in his usually high-strung schedule.

"Please Gamagoori, teach me!" Mako pleaded once again. "If you teach me, I promise not to be on the battlefield when Ryuuko fights anymore!"

Gamagoori involuntarily flinched. He worried for her safety more than he should he knew that, but the hope to see Mankanshoku out of harm compelled him to agree to teach her to drive. He would deal with an repercussions of this later with Lady Satsuki, but for now he had a job as a driving teacher to focus on. He knew he had to get Mako the appropriate education on a car, the rules of the road, a basic understanding on how to use a car, and a long list of other things before he could even put her behind the wheel of a motor vehicle, but apparently to Mako all she needed to get her license was to drive and not die. It became blatantly obvious when she appeared i the driver's seat of his car, trying to pull the locked seat belt over her.

"Mankanshoku! What are you doing?!" he demanded. Mako jumped, turning to look at the fuming Three-Star Council Chair.

"Trying to get the seatbelt on! I'm ready to drive already! I know how things like this work!"

"Absolutely not! Get out of my car now!"

"But why?" Mako whined, "Don't you just push the gas down and try not to crash into things and kill people?"

"Not in the slightest," Gamagoori growled, "There are rules, lessons, and important things to learn before you could even touch the steering wheel! Now please get out of my car before you hurt yourself"

"You're so uptight Gamagoori sir! I learned the basics from my father! I can drive this care safe enough, I swear. Pleeeeease let me drive.

If I can drive this car without killing us or hurting someone else, can I skip all the boring classroom learning?"

"Not in any way can you skip the important part of learning to drive" Gamagoori deflected her proposal as if it were a fly. Mako stood up in the driver seat, preparing her usual defensive rant-speech mid-battle.

"Important?! Did you remember anything when you decided to spin the holy Goku out of your car to keep those automotive bullies from getting us? You should have learned that spinning a car leads to a spin out and crashing and yet you did it anyway and sent me flying into an airbag head first! Did you even do book learning before getting your license or did you teach yourself and just drove around until you deemed yourself safe and ready to drive around the city? My father barely got his license and he's known that for a while and can do the most amazing things in his van! He may crash a lot, not know how to park or really brake and really doesn't understand safety to any point except when it comes to injured people but he can at least understand that spinning a car makes it crash!

If my father can survive and you can drive without a set of prescribed rules for the road then I can learn perfectly well from you both! I've learned enough from my father and now it's your turn to teach me what you know about actually driving a car! If I know you truly then you'll get in the back of this awesome car and instruct me how to start, back up and drive this car! I know you trust or at least respect me and I want you to trust me now! I know I can do this Gamagoori! Let me drive this car until I get it right!"

Gamagoori stood stunned. Mako had figured out everything in a matter of seconds and used such information to make a damning, rather appropriate argument to his rejection of the driving. He really had not had much time in the classroom to learn, but instead watched and studied others driving to fully understand it. He had earned his license by sheer luck that he knew how to operate the damn thing. He didn't need to know how Mankanshoku's father and learned to drive and earned his license, but somehow the man

managed. Mako stood her ground still in his car, and he knew she was right. He let a sigh escape him.

"Alright Mankanshoku. We'll drive today. Get buckled in"

"Woohoo! Thank you Gamagoori! Come on, come on, come on! Lets drive! Let's go!"

"Why in the hell did I agree to this!?"

That was most of what Gamagoori screamed as Mako raced out of the Three-Star's garage as fast as she could with the biggest shit-eating grin she could bring to the drive and raced out of the academy.

Mid-release of the students.

Students did their best to dodge and roll out of the way of the speeding car running through the courtyards as if it were an angry, pissed-out-beyond-belief bull ready to rip up anyone who got in the way with their horns. Mako screamed from her spot in the driver's seat for the students to move out of the way, and most did with some success while the others pinged off the hood of the car, sailing over Gamagoori's head with such confused and terrified expressions. One student in particular barely clear over the car ad Gamagoori had to duck down far to avoid being hit upside the head by a student who couldn't move or jump fast enough out of the path of the car.

"I think I have the hang of this Gamagoori sir! I'm heading for the city!"

Oh please don't destroy the city, was the thought that passed through Gamagoori's mind as he suddenly seemed to drop out of his body just as the car dropped down from the side of the school, slamming roughly on to the street leading down the spiraling throughout the city and slums. Gamagoori's head collided into the front side back, hitting his head enough to make stars twinkle in his

eyes before he regained his sight and thoughts. He could feel the bruise already start to develop on his forehead. He looked up to see the Two-Star housing fly past them in a gust of wind, Mako's hooting and hollering ringing in his ears.

"Woohoo! I can see why you like to do this Gamagoori! It's so much fun!"

"I-I can tell you're having fun Mankanshoku, but seriously, no, don't turn to face me to talk WATCH THE ROAD MANKANSHOKU!"

Gamagoori launched himself over Mako to grab the wheel and steer her from slamming into the gate into the One-Star condos, avoiding a crash that would have easily hurt or killed them both. Mako slammed her foot down on the brake, effectively throwing them like rag-dolls back and forth until they stopped right before they hit yet another wall. Gamagoori groaned in weak pain as he sat up in the back seat, rubbing his head as it pounded with a fierce headache. Mako sat puffing out her breath in the driver's seat, eyes like saucers as she stared at the wall as if it were the Nudist Beach members.

"Are you okay Mankanshoku?" Gamagoori asked, rubbing his forehead once more before letting the pain settle in him. Mako slowly nodded, like she was captured by the fact that she could have killed them both for a moment, then shook her self as if she was wet and returned to her usual self.

"Yep, I'm okay! Are you okay Gamagoori… ah! You're bruised on your head! What happened, did I do it, I'm sorry forgive me"

"Mankanshoku, it's alright…"

"No it's not! You're hurt and I did it I know it! Was it because I jumped on to the street from the school, I'm really sorry"

"Mankanshoku! It's alright! Thank you for… , hmm, caring for my health but it's alright. I've had worse" Gamagoori assured her, but something stuck with Mako. She was silent for a moment, back into

their stunned self, looking like she had mad the worst mistake in her life. She looked pained to see that her actions and hurtful consequences, but she seemed to also digress past it. She shook off her moment of melancholy and started up the car again, smiling as she did before.

"Okay! Now how do I back up? It's with this stick thing right?"

"Correct," Gamagoori confirmed, leaning up to the front of the car, "You pull it back until it lined up at the 'R', see it? Now just take hold of it like this…"

Gamagoori told hold of Mako's hand, suddenly reeling in the feelings racing around in his head. The suspicion that Mako felt something more than concern and friendship. The realization that both of them were blushing as they held hands for a fraction of a minute. Both looked up from their joined hands to stare into the other's eyes, briefly seeing the mutual feelings they hid, but it faded from Gamagoori as he recovered from the sudden moment. He moved Mako's hand over the clutch and instructed her how to pull it back and keep it there to safely back up the car. Mako successfully learned how to back up and when the task was down, she shook Gamagoori's hand off and pulled the clutch into park.

"Are you okay Mankanshoku?" Gamagoori asked, picking up on the distress vibrating off Mako as she sat still with her hands like vices on the steering wheel.

"Yeah, just trying to collect myself. Give me a moment"

The moment didn't last long and soon Mako was bouncing around, ready to drive through the city. She tapped her fingers along the clutch, waiting for Gamagoori's signal to go. He had to admit her enthusiasm for the job of driving was infectious and he found himself relaxing into the wildness more than he probably should. He gave her the go ahead, warning her not to take too many detours with the speed she used because they would most likely end up lost or crash or somehow end up in the water of the Bay they sat in. She gunned

it, running the car quickly into the slums of the city. She raced paced students and seedy characters in alleyways, running the car fast and swift.

She also ran the car through every single alleyway and road she could fit the car in. She weaved and bobbed through so many streets and alleys, making figure eights and countless loops and shapes so many times Gamagoori couldn't figure out if they were heading toward the outskirts of the city or back up to the Academy. However he did notice that Mako was getting nervous as they entered a darker part of the city, and instantly he was on alert. He did a wipe sweep look around, watching the shadows as they sped by. Mako had slowed down, actually being careful as she rolled through what Gamagoori could only describe as the darkest, creepiest part of the slums.

"Mako, where are we?" Gamagoori asked. Mako looked over her shoulder and froze with a screech. Gamagoori followed her sight to what was behind them. He grabbed for his whips just in time as bullets went flying, blocking them as best he could. Mako ducked in protection, keeping the car going.

"What the hell is shooting at us? And speed up Mankanshoku we need to get out of here!"

Mako slammed her foot down, rocketing the car forward, but the spray of bullets continued to hit them. Gamagoori sent out his whip for a trash can, taking it and flinging it in the general direction of the bullets. The few screams he heard and a stop to the bullets gave his answer to the hope that he hit whoever was shooting.

"My brother's enemies most likely," Mako whispered over the roar of the car as she sped out of the dark streets, "He must have gotten in someone else's turf and messed things up again"

"How is that even possible? How old is your brother to already be targeted by gun?"

"I have no clue, all I know is that, OH GOD-"

Mako and Gamagoori forgot to keep their attention on the road, and slammed and grinded against a hard metal barrier set up on the end of the street they rode along, throwing them around in the car as the twisted metal flew and decorated the car and the car itself suffered bad damage. Mako was cushioned by the airbag as it deployed, capturing her in the pudgy bag. Gamagoori however was subjected to the shower of mental and the back of his car as he ragdolled down to the floor. Once everything settled and the few lingering witnesses scattered and left, all was silent. The metal gate still vibrated with the shock of the hit, but it was barely heard. Finally Mako groaned as she heaved herself out of the airbag, gasping for breath as the airbag had taken her air.

"I'm okay! I'm okay, nothing broken except the car and… Gamagoori! Are you…"

She could feel the color drain from her face as Gamagoori finally sat up from the crash, hand pressed firmly on his forehead. She couldn't hold back the gasp as she saw the blood fall from the guard of his fingers down into his eyes.

There was so much crimson falling from his head, and her heart dropped into an abyss.

He was struggling to keep it from bleeding too much, that was obvious, and she could just see his fingers digging for something; a piece of metal was her best guess. All she could set in true solid stone was that he was trying to hide the fact that he was hurting a lot; she could only see the head wound, the rest of him could be even worse.

"A-are you okay Mankanshoku?"

Even through it all, he cared for her safety, not bothering with his own health.

She nodded numbly. She couldn't stop staring at the streams and trickles of blood falling down Gamagoori's face. He was making a weird face; obviously trying to hide the pain. Mako's hand gently wiped away a stream, only to smear it across his face but it sent the message she needed to.

Gamagoori's face softened and in response Mako's hardened. She knew what to do. She started by trying to tug off her uniform top.

"What are you doing?" Gamagoori demanded, "Put your shirt back-"

"No! Just… put this against your head for now! I don't want you to bleed anymore"

"Mankanshoku, its fine" Gamagoori insisted, but his voice lacked its usual power. Mako's fury for Gamagoori's refusal to admit he was not fine in any manner let loose.

"NO IT'S NOT!" Mako snapped. "I've hurt you now twice and I plan to never again! Now press this on that gash now and hold on! I'm taking you somewhere where I can get you help because I know I can't help you much out here! Just admit you're in pain already so I can just admit to myself that I messed up and need to fix this before it gets worse!"

Gamagoori flinched, hissing as his bruised limbs moved too much for the dodge of pain. He had never seen Mako get mad, or even this adamant on his health, but it struck home and he knew he couldn't dodge such things with Mako. She kept a hard stare on him, waiting for him to finally take her shirt and admit he was hurting. He was about to comply when he saw that Mako had given up and thrown the shirt into his lap and pulled the clutched into reverse. He wadded up the shirt and pressed it to the gash on his head. As she looked over her shoulder, as if to back up, she saw what Gamagoori had done and sadly smiled.

"Where are you planning to go? The closest thing to a hospital is in Two-Star territory and they wont let you in"

"I'm not going anywhere near there"

"Somewhere close?" Gamagoori was drawing a blank on anything that resembled healthcare down in the slums, or maybe that was his concussion finally showing itself. That made sense since he seemed to sway in his seat, his head felt like it was being pressed down on and he was tired and dizzy enough to knock him out if he hadn't the insight to not fall asleep.

"My father's the slum's back alley doctor. It's the best, we, HAVE!"

Mako safely maneuvered the car to back up and around in the tight street, pulling the clutch back into drive and roaring off down the streets and alleys. She didn't detour for a fun game of figure eight around every last building or loop around the random people in the street. She honked when people got in the way and drove ramrod straight down streets. She seemed to have the skill of an experienced driver as she turned with haste up another hill, ignoring all her previous distractions like a pro. Although his vision swam ad blurred, Gamagoori could see the change in Mako as she press on in the car, driving fast but not with over excited foolishness. She took safety into the equation yet knew she had to cut corners to reduce time bumping along the poorly paved slum roads. She sharply turned the car until it was parallel with a narrow alley she couldn't drive through ad bailed out running for the house.

"I'll be back Gamagoori, don't move!"

Gamagoori sat back, pressing the soft sailor uniform top to the gash, hoping it would soak the blood up. He was proven wrong however as he found a new cut had opened and dribbled blood down into his right eye. He ignored it however as he slowly was slipping into unconsciousness. He had to stay awake, for Mako.

Before he slipped into darkness, he saw Mako running toward him with her parents close behind, yelling out his first name and demanding him to say awake,

"Please wake up…"

"I think he's dead"

"No he isn't! He's survived way worse with way less injuries. It's all my fault he's like this…"

"I still can't believe you basically killed an Elite Four of Honnōji Academy!"

"SHUT UP AND GO AWAY!"

"Okay, okay, I'll go! Sheesh, when did you get so defensive on a guy that-"

A screen door slammed closed. Gamagoori eye's barely opened before he groaned and tried to get away from the brightness of the area around him. He felt something soft run along his left shoulder, and a pair of hands wrapped around left hand.

"You're okay! Come on, it's not too bright, or wait it is? I'll close up these here, give me a moment…"

The light behind his eyelids dimmed and he finally could open his eyes wider. He could see the watery image of Mako before she solidified. She was wrapped up in a nightgown, bandages visible through the pastel color of the dress. She was red around the eyes; she was crying while he was unconscious. He blinked a few times and finally fully opened his eyes.

"You really are okay. I was worried that you had slipped into a coma like my dad said you may have"

He didn't respond, linking several times again to adjust to the light still and to blink back his own tears. Besides the fact that his back was hurting him just a bit, he was moved by the devotion Mako showed for his well-being. Mako quickly wiped tears back, and smiled.

"Oh, um… should I explain what happened after you lost consciousness?"

"If you could" Gamagoori croaked. He tried to swat away his hair from his eyes, but found his arms heavy as lead so he kept them on his midsection, looking over at Mako.

"Well we were able to get you in the house with Ryuuko helping us because we couldn't move you much because of the concussion. We didn't want to hurt you even more"

"Matoi?"

"Yep! She and Senketsu helped get you in safely. I think without them you would have been… hurt more. A-anyway we brought you in and Dad and Mom got to work. We had fun trying to take off your Goku Uniform, it's okay by the way it's hanging up we had to was hit. Blood on it. You were really bruised, that was most of it but we were scared it was worse so we binded you up just in case you hurt your ribs or things. The cut on your forehead we stitched up and covered, that's why your hair's loose"

Mako brushed away some of said hair from his eyes, locking with them for a long minute of silence. As like before in the car, their faces slowly heated up in an unexpected blush. Mako smiled wide and sighed, content in just playing with Gamagoori's hair. Gamagoori watched Mako as she simply messed with his hair, silently filling him in with what happened when he was out.

"I'm glad you weren't hurt worse Gamagoori" Mako said after she finished explaining, "I'm sorry also for wrecking your car"

"It's okay Mankanshoku. I'll get it fixed. You're driving helped keep me alive, remember that"

"But it was also the reason you got hurt!"

"You made up for it in the end with your driving, which was perfect and impressive. Thank you for helping me Mako"

She smiled, pride swelling up in her. Gamagoori was impressed with her driving! She did well!

"I probably can't repeat it though" she said. Gamagoori gave a weak shrug.

"At least we know that you can do it. Maybe, ahem, if your up for it after we're both healed up, um… maybe you'd like to try again?"

Mako's eyes lit up. "Really?! You'd let me drive again!?"

"You are trying to get your license, correct? That means practice, practice and even more practice on the road. So… do you want to practice with me again?"

His face heated up as he waited for an answer. Mako saw it too and giggled, amused by the cuteness of it.

"Of course," Mako cheered, "why would I say no to going places with you Gamagoori?"